

U.S. COVID-19 deaths hit 600,000, equal to yearly cancer toll

Associated Press

The U.S. death toll from COVID-19 topped 600,000 on Tuesday, even as the vaccination drive has drastically brought down daily cases and fatalities and allowed the country to emerge from the gloom and look forward to summer.

The number of lives lost, as recorded by Johns Hopkins University, is greater than the population of Baltimore or Milwaukee. It is about equal to the number of Americans who died of cancer in 2019. Worldwide, the COVID-19 death toll stands at about 3.8 million. The milestone came the same day that California and New York lifted most of their remaining restrictions, joining other states in opening the way, step by step, for what could be a fun and close to normal summer for many Americans.

"Deep down I want to rejoice," said Rita Torres, a re-

tired university administrator in Oakland, California. But she plans to take it slow: "Because it's kind of like, is it too soon? Will we be sorry?" With the arrival of the vaccine in mid-December, COVID-19 deaths per day in the U.S. have plummeted to an average of around 340, from a high of over 3,400 in mid-January. Cases are running at about 14,000 a day on average, down from a quarter-million per day over the winter.

The real death tolls in the U.S. and around the globe are thought to be significantly higher, with many cases overlooked or possibly concealed by some countries.

President Joe Biden acknowledged the approaching milestone Monday during his visit to Europe, saying that while new cases and deaths are dropping dramatically in the U.S., "there's still too many lives being lost," and



In this May 28, 2020, file photo, Tributes to lost love ones adorn a fence outside Brooklyn's Green-Wood Cemetery where many victims of COVID-19 are buried in New York.

Associated Press

"now is not the time to let our guard down."

The most recent deaths are seen in some ways as especially tragic now that

the vaccine has become available practically for the asking. More than 50% of Americans have had at least one dose of vaccine,

while over 40% are fully vaccinated, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

Continued on next page

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A person arrives for a COVID-19 inoculation at a mass-vaccination site at the former Citizens Bank headquarters in Cranston, R.I., Thursday, June 10, 2021.

Associated Press

Continued from Front

But demand for shots in the U.S. has dropped off dramatically, leaving many

places with a surplus of doses and casting doubt on whether the country will meet Biden's target of hav-

ing 70% of American adults at least partially vaccinated by July 4. The figure stands at just under 65%.

As of a week ago, the U.S. was averaging about 1 million injections per day, down from a high of about 3.3 million a day on average in mid-April, according to the CDC.

At nearly every turn in the outbreak, the virus has exploited and worsened inequalities in the United States. CDC figures, when adjusted for age and population, show that Black, Latino and Native American people are two to three times more likely than whites to die of COVID-19. Also, an Associated Press analysis found that Latinos are dying at much younger ages than other groups. Hispanic people between 30 and 39 have died at five times the rate of white people in the same age group. Overall, Black and Hispanic Americans have less access to medical care and are in poorer health, with higher rates of conditions such as diabetes and high blood pressure. They are also more likely to have jobs deemed essential, less able to work from home and more likely to live in crowded, multigenerational households.

With the overall picture improving rapidly, California, the most populous state and the first to impose a coronavirus lockdown, dropped state rules on social distancing and limits on capacity at restaurants, bars, supermarkets, gyms, stadiums and other places, ushering in what has been billed as its "Grand Reopening" just in time for summer. Disneyland is throwing open its gates to all tourists after allowing just California residents. Fans will be able to sit elbow-to-elbow and cheer without masks at Dodgers and Giants games.

Gov. Gavin Newsom celebrated by hosting a drawing in which 10 people won \$1.5 million each simply for

being vaccinated.

In New York, Gov. Andrew Cuomo said Tuesday that 70% of adults in the state have received at least one dose of the vaccine, and he announced that the immediate easing of many of the restrictions will be celebrated with fireworks. "What does 70% mean? It means that we can now return to life as we know it," he said.

He said the state is lifting rules that had limited the size of gatherings and required some types of businesses to follow cleaning protocols, take people's temperature or screen them for COVID-19 symptoms. Businesses will no longer have to restrict how many people they can allow inside based on the 6-foot rule.

For the time being, though, New Yorkers will have to keep wearing masks in schools, subways and certain other places.

Massachusetts on Tuesday officially lifted a state of emergency that had been in effect for 462 days, though many restrictions had already been eased, including mask requirements and limits on gatherings. Republican lawmakers in Kansas decided to let a state of emergency expire Tuesday. And Maryland's governor announced that the emergency there will end on July 1, with the state no longer requiring any masks.

The first known deaths from the virus in the U.S. were in early February 2020. It took four months to reach the first 100,000 dead. During the most lethal phase of the disaster, in the winter of 2020-21, it took just over a month to go from 300,000 to 400,000 deaths.

With the crisis now easing, it took close to four months for the U.S. death toll to go from a half-million to 600,000. □



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Emails show Trump pressured Justice Dept. over 2020 election

By MICHAEL BALSAMO and COLLEEN LONG

Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — During the last weeks of his presidency, Donald Trump and his allies pressured the Justice Department to investigate unsubstantiated claims of widespread 2020 election fraud that even his former attorney general declared without evidence, newly released emails show.

The emails, released Tuesday by the House Oversight Committee, reveal in new detail how Trump, his White House chief of staff and other allies pressured members of the U.S. government to challenge the 2020 election over false claims.

Officials at Homeland Security and the Justice Department, as well as Republican election leaders across the country, repeatedly said there was no pervasive fraud. Former Attorney General William Barr, a longtime Trump loyalist, was among those who said there was no evidence of such fraud.

The emails also show the extent to which Trump worked to enlist then-acting Attorney General Jeffrey Rosen in his campaign's failing legal efforts to challenge the election result, including suggesting filing a brief with the U.S. Supreme Court.

Those sent to Rosen include debunked conspiracy theories and false information about voter fraud. Trump's lies about the election helped spur on the mob that stormed the U.S. Capitol on Jan. 6 in a failed effort to stop the certification of Joe Biden's victory.

Several times, for example, Trump allies wrote about Dominion Voting Systems' potential voter fraud, a conspiracy theory now the subject of a billion-dollar defamation lawsuit by the voting company. Trump's chief of staff, Mark Meadows, asked about investigating allegations of voter fraud caused by satellites from Italy.

Meadows tried to have Rosen investigate the conspiracy theories and pushed the acting attorney



In this June 1, 2020 file photo, President Donald Trump walks past police in Lafayette Park after visiting outside St. John's Church across from the White House in Washington.

Associated Press

general to meet with an ally of Trump lawyer Rudy Giuliani who was pitching unfounded election conspiracies that Italy was using satellites and military technology to change votes.

After Rosen forwarded Meadows' email, Rich Donoghue, the acting deputy attorney general, sent a note to Rosen that said, "pure insanity." Rosen wrote back that he was asked to have the FBI meet with Giuliani's associate and he said no, insisting the man could follow the FBI's normal protocol for tips and just call the public tip line or take his information to an FBI field office. But Rosen said Giuliani was "insulted" by the answer.

"Asked if I would reconsider, I flatly refused, said I would not be giving any special treatment to Giuliani or any of his 'witnesses,' and re-affirmed yet again that I will not talk to Giuliani about any of this," Rosen wrote.

On Dec. 14, the day that Electoral College votes were certified and that Barr said he would be resigning later that month, a Trump White House assistant sent a note to Rosen with the subject "From POTUS," an

acronym for president of the United States. The email to Rosen, a deputy attorney general who became acting attorney general after Barr left, included talking points on alleged voter fraud in Antrim County, in a key battleground state, Michigan. Those included claims like "a Cover-up is Happening regarding voting machines in Michigan" and "Michigan cannot certify for Biden."

Just moments after the Trump assistant sent the documents, Donoghue sent the same documents to the U.S. attorneys in the Eastern and Western districts of Michigan.

On Dec. 29, the Trump assistant emailed Rosen, Donoghue and Acting Solicitor General Jeffrey Wall and included a draft legal brief for the Supreme Court, with a phone number where they could contact the president directly. The pro-

posed complaint asked the court to "declare that the Electoral College votes cast" in the six battleground states that Trump lost "cannot be counted." It asked for the court to order a special election in those states. One of Trump's private attorneys then emailed senior Justice officials urging them to file the complaint.

The emails show he repeatedly called Rosen's senior advisers and others in the Justice Department demanding meetings, saying he was driving from Maryland to Justice Department headquarters in Washington to meet with Rosen because he couldn't reach him.

"As I said on our call, the President of the United States has seen this complaint, and he directed me last night to brief AG Rosen in person today and discuss bringing this action," he wrote in one email. "I have

been instructed to report back to the President this afternoon after this meeting."

The Associated Press reported late last year on the effort within the Trump administration to pressure government employees to adopt the false narrative of 2020 election fraud. Trump asked the Justice Department to investigate instances of voter fraud, and Justice leaders sent a memo to the states prioritizing the effort. Trump also asked that a special prosecutor be named to investigate the false voter fraud claims.

And the official serving as Trump's eyes and ears at the Justice Department tried to pressure staffers to give up sensitive information about election fraud and other matters she could relay to the White House. She was banned from the building.

Trump considered replacing Rosen with a more loyal ally, Jeffrey Clark, and even looked into whether the White House could appoint a special counsel without the Justice Department's approval. On Jan. 1, for example, Meadows asked Rosen to have Clark investigate "signature match anomalies in Fulton county, GA."

It didn't happen, and on Jan. 3 another Justice official wrote that the "cause of justice won."

Three days later, hundreds of pro-Trump rioters broke into the Capitol, attacking police and causing dozens of injuries, causing \$1.5 million in damage and sending lawmakers fleeing for their lives. Five people died, including a police officer who collapsed that day. At least 400 people have been arrested in connection with the riot, the largest Justice Department prosecution in history. □



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Police: Gunman dead after killing 2 at fire hydrant factory

ALBERTVILLE, Ala. (AP) — A worker wielding a handgun fatally shot two people and wounded two others at an Alabama fire hydrant factory early Tuesday before killing himself, police said. The shooting — which happened about 2:30 a.m. at a Mueller Co. plant in Albertville — added to a slew of homicides around the country. Several hours later, gunfire in Chicago claimed four victims.

In the Alabama case, a manhunt ended when the shooter's body was found inside a Jeep in Guntersville, about 15 miles (24 kilometers) away from the factory, shortly after daybreak. Multiple weapons were found inside the vehicle, Albertville Police Chief Jamie Smith said at a news conference.

Smith said the suspect appears to have died from a self-inflicted gunshot wound. What prompted him to kill and maim his co-workers wasn't immediately clear, the chief said. He called the shooting "completely unprovoked." The chief identified the dead men as Michael Dobbins and David Horton, and the shooter as Andreas Horton, 34. He said that as far as he knew, the Hortons were not related, and had "no ties other than co-workers."

Two other people — Casey Sampson and Isaac Byrd — were hospitalized. Their conditions weren't immediately known. They were taken to a nearby hospital and later transferred to



A police officer walks at the entrance to a Mueller Co. fire hydrant plant where police said multiple people were shot to death and others were wounded in Albertville, Ala., on Tuesday, June 15, 2021.

Associated Press

a larger hospital in Chattanooga, Tennessee, the chief said.

The body of Andreas Horton, who was sometimes called Andy, was found in his vehicle, parked along a road overlooking his mother's grave in Guntersville City Cemetery. She died of cancer at age 40 in 2011. A distant relative of Horton's, Sanchez Watkins, said he last saw Andreas a few months ago at a grocery store.

"Andy was a good guy. Very quiet, easygoing. You would never expect this from him," Watkins said.

Cody Windsor, a Mueller employee who was at home at the time, told The Associated Press that he knew both Hortons, but

didn't know what might have prompted the shootings.

Windsor said friends working the overnight shift told him the shooting happened in a part of the plant where fire hydrants and pipes are painted, and that an announcement about an active shooter was made over a PA system at the factory, which occupies several buildings over a large area near a railroad track, with fire hydrants stored on racks outside.

The police chief said the crime scene encompasses a large area inside the sprawling plant, and victims were found in two or three different locations inside.

Windsor said he and David Horton, a foundry helper

who could do most any job in the plant, were buddies at work and often hung out together during breaks. "We'd sit in our cars and listen to music," he said. "Andy" Horton was quiet and recently went through the death of his mother, Windsor said.

"We work together and we bond together. We're here as much as we are at home," he said. He added that the shooting made him nervous about going back to work for fear "that somebody is going to walk in the door and shoot you." Ann Walters told Al.com that Dobbins was her grandson, and that he had been working at the factory for nearly a year, saving up to buy a home and

a car. "He was a perfect gentleman, everybody will tell you. He was good to everybody and put his family first," she said.

Mueller Co., based in Cleveland, Tennessee, is a subsidiary of Atlanta-based Mueller Water Products Inc., which calls itself a leading maker of water distribution and measurement products in North America. More than 400 people work at the plant in Albertville, giving the city in northwest Alabama its nickname of "Fire Hydrant Capital of the World."

In a statement read aloud by the police chief, company officials said they were "shocked and deeply saddened by the horrific tragedy," and "committed to providing help and support" to the victims' families. The growing gun violence nationwide has police and criminal justice experts concerned. Within hours of the Alabama gunfire Tuesday, four women were killed and four other people were wounded in a pre-dawn shooting at a home in Chicago, police said. The toll from this past weekend included two people killed and at least 30 others wounded in mass shootings in Chicago, the Texas capital of Austin, and Savannah, Georgia.

Law officers had hoped that last year's spike in homicides would subside as the nation emerges from coronavirus restrictions, but they remain higher than they were in pre-pandemic times. □

Groups ask judge to block Arkansas' near-total abortion ban

By ANDREW DeMILLO

LITTLE ROCK, Ark. (AP) — Abortion rights supporters asked a federal judge on Monday to prevent Arkansas' near-total ban on the procedure from taking effect while the groups challenge its constitutionality. The American Civil Liberties Union and Planned Parenthood asked the judge to issue a temporary restraining order or preliminary injunction against the ban, which is set to take effect July 28.

The groups filed a lawsuit last month challenging the ban, which prohibits abortions except those to save the life of the mother.

The groups filed the lawsuit on behalf of Little Rock Family Planning Services, a Little Rock abortion clinic, and Planned Parenthood's Little Rock health center. The groups are also representing a doctor who works at the Planned Parenthood clinic.

"Absent an order from this

Court, (the ban) will inflict on plaintiffs' patients significant and irreparable harm for which there is no adequate remedy at law," the filing Monday said.

Amanda Priest, a spokeswoman for Attorney General Leslie Rutledge, said the groups' motion "should not come as a surprise to anyone."

"Attorney General Rutledge will be reviewing the latest action and will proceed," she said.

The U.S. Supreme Court last month agreed to take up a case on whether states can ban abortions before a fetus can survive outside the womb, a showdown that could dramatically alter nearly 50 years of rulings on the procedure.

That case, which focuses on a Mississippi law banning abortion 15 weeks into a woman's pregnancy, probably will be argued in the fall, with a decision likely in the spring of 2022.

Republican lawmakers in Arkansas and several other states enacted new abortion bans even before that case was announced, encouraged by former President Donald Trump's appointments to the high court.

In the filing, the groups called the outright ban "simply the latest and most blatant effort in Arkansas' long-running campaign to eliminate legal abortion in the state." □

Ikea fined \$1.3 million over spying campaign in France

By **NICOLAS VAUX-MONTAGNY**

VERSAILLES, France (AP)

— A French court ordered home furnishings giant Ikea to pay some 1.1 million euros (\$1.3 million) in fines and damages Tuesday over a campaign to spy on union representatives, employees and some unhappy customers in France.

Two former Ikea France executives were convicted and fined over the scheme and given suspended prison sentences. Among the other 13 defendants in the high-profile trial, some were acquitted and others given suspended sentences.

Adel Amara, a former Ikea employee who helped expose the wrongdoing, called the ruling "a big step in defense of the citizen....It makes me glad that there is justice in France."

The panel of judges at the Versailles court found that between 2009 and 2012, Ikea's French subsidiary used espionage to sift out trouble-makers in the employee ranks and to profile squabbling customers.

Ikea France was convicted of receiving personal data obtained through fraudulent means in a habitual way, and ordered to pay 1 million euros in fines and about 100,000 euros (\$121,225) in damages.

Ingka Group, which owns and operates most Ikea stores, noted in a statement after the verdicts that the French retail operation "has strongly condemned the practices, apologized and implemented a major action plan to prevent this from happening again."

"We will now review the court's decision in detail and consider if and where any additional measures are necessary," the group said.

Trade unions accused Ikea France of collecting personal data by fraudulent means, notably via illegally obtained police files, and illicitly disclosing personal information. Lawyers for Ikea France denied that the company had any strategy of "generalized espionage." A lawyer for the unions, Solene Debarre, expressed



In this Wednesday, Nov. 30, 2013 file photo, customers leave an IKEA store in Plaisir, west of Paris. Associated Press

hope that the verdict would "make some companies tremble."

"One million euros isn't much for Ikea, but it's a symbol," Debarre said.

The company, which said it cooperated in the investigation, had faced a potential financial penalty of up to 3.75 million euros (\$4.5 million). Prosecutor Pamela Tabardel asked the court to hand "an exemplary sentence and a strong message to all companies."

The executive who was in charge of risk management at the time of the spying, Jean-François Paris, acknowledged to French judges that 530,000 to 630,000 euros a year were earmarked for such investigations. Paris — the only official to have admitted to the alleged illegal sleuthing — said his department was responsible for handling the operation on orders from former Ikea France CEO Jean-Louis Baillot.

Paris was convicted of fraudulently gathering personal data, fined 10,000 euros (\$12,125) and given an 18-month suspended sentence.

Baillot, who denied ordering a spy operation, was convicted of receiving fraudulently collected data and complicity in the scheme. He was fined 50,000 euros (\$60,626) and given a two-year suspended sentence.

Another former CEO of Ikea

France was acquitted for lack of evidence.

Ikea France's lawyer, Emmanuel Daoud, said the

company hadn't decided whether to appeal. He said the case was marked by a lack of hard evidence, and noted that the fines were well below the maximum possible.

"The court took into account the action plan that Ikea put in place after the revelation of the facts, in 2012. That's very satisfying," Daoud said.

The company fired four executives and changed internal policy after French prosecutors opened a criminal probe in 2012.

Trade unions alleged that Ikea France paid to gain access to police files that had information about targeted individuals, particularly union activists and customers who were in disputes with Ikea. □

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Poll finds dramatic rise in Palestinian support for Hamas

By JOSEPH KRAUSS

Associated Press

JERUSALEM (AP) — A new poll released Tuesday finds a dramatic surge in Palestinian support for Hamas following last month's Gaza war, with around three quarters viewing the Islamic militants as victors in a battle against Israel to defend Jerusalem and its holy sites. The scientific poll by the Palestinian Center for Policy and Survey Research also found plummeting support for President Mahmoud Abbas, who was sidelined by the war but is seen internationally as a partner for reviving the long-defunct peace process.

The poll found that 53% of Palestinians believe Hamas is "most deserving of representing and leading the Palestinian people," while only 14% prefer Abbas' secular Fatah party.

Head pollster Khalil Shikaki, who has been surveying Palestinian public opinion for more than two decades, called it a "dramatic" shift, but said it also resembles previous swings toward Hamas during times of confrontation. Those all dissipated within three to six months as Hamas failed to deliver on promises of change.



Palestinians gather during a Hamas rally in Gaza City, Wednesday, June 9, 2021.

Associated Press

The march to war began in April, when Palestinian protesters clashed with Israeli police on a nightly basis in east Jerusalem over restrictions on public gatherings during the holy month of Ramadan. The clashes eventually spread to the Al-Aqsa mosque compound, a flashpoint holy site, and were also fueled by Jewish settlers' attempts to evict dozens of Palestinian families.

Israel captured east Jeru-

salem, along with the West Bank and Gaza, in the 1967 war and annexed it in a move not recognized internationally. The Palestinians want a state in all three territories, with east Jerusalem as its capital. Hamas, which is seen as a terrorist organization by Israel and Western countries, does not recognize Israel.

After warning Israel to halt the evictions and withdraw security forces from Al-Aqsa, Hamas launched

a barrage of long-range rockets at Jerusalem on May 10, disrupting an annual parade by Jewish ultranationalists celebrating Israel's conquest of east Jerusalem. That sparked an 11-day war in which more than 250 Palestinians were killed, as well as 13 people in Israel.

The poll found that 77% of Palestinians believe Hamas emerged as a winner, with nearly as many saying that it fought the war to defend

Jerusalem and its holy sites, rather than as part of an internal struggle with Abbas' Fatah party.

The pollsters held face-to-face surveys with 1,200 Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza last week, with a 3 percentage point margin of error.

"Clearly, in the eyes of the public, Hamas came out as a winner," Shikaki said, adding that it may struggle to maintain those gains as it has little control over events in Jerusalem.

An early test loomed Tuesday, when Jewish ultranationalists planned to march through east Jerusalem again.

Hamas has called on Palestinians to "resist" but may be reluctant to risk another war just weeks after the last one was halted by an informal cease-fire.

The Biden administration and the international community are meanwhile looking to bolster Abbas. Hamas drove his forces out of Gaza in 2007, confining his Palestinian Authority to parts of the Israeli-occupied West Bank.

Abbas faces a major crisis of legitimacy among Palestinians after calling off the first elections in 15 years in April. □

Sri Lanka seeks UN help in assessing damage from ship fire



Sri Lankan navy soldiers walk on the beach looking for plastic debris washed ashore from fire damaged container ship MV X-Press Pearl at Kapungoda, on the outskirts of Colombo, Sri Lanka. Monday, June 14, 2021.

Associated Press

By BHARATHA MALLA-WARACHI

COLOMBO, Sri Lanka (AP)

— Sri Lanka's government is seeking help from the

United Nations and other countries in assessing the environmental damage caused by a fire on a container ship carrying chemi-

cals that is sinking off its capital, officials said Tuesday.

The 12-day fire on the MV X-Press Pearl ravaged the vessel, destroyed most of its cargo and caused severe pollution in the ocean and along a long stretch of the island nation's famed beaches.

State Minister of Urban Development and Coast Conservation Nalaka Godahewa said the government has contacted the U.N. and some other countries because "expertise within the country isn't sufficient to accurately calculate the damage." He did not identify the other countries.

The U.N. has pledged to send three experts who are scheduled to arrive on Wednesday, Godahewa

said. One will assess damage suffered by the economy.

On Saturday, Sri Lanka said it is seeking an interim claim of \$40 million from the ship's operator, X-Press Feeders, to cover part of the cost of fighting the fire.

The fire broke out on the Singapore-flagged ship on May 20 when it was anchored about 9.5 nautical miles (18 kilometers) northwest of Colombo and waiting to enter the port.

The Sri Lankan navy believes the blaze was caused by its chemical cargo, which included 25 tons of nitric acid. Debris including burned fiberglass and tons of plastic pellets have polluted nearby beaches, and there are concerns that a spill of the remaining

chemicals and oil on the ship could devastate marine life.

Authorities extinguished the fire last week, but the ship then began sinking and attempts to tow it into deeper waters failed when its stern rested on the seabed.

On Tuesday, the ship's operator said its "bow and forecastle deck are now submerged, and the forward section of the hull continues to slowly settle to the seabed at a depth of 21 meters (70 feet)."

Police arrested the ship's Russian captain, Tyutkalo Vitaly, on Monday. He appeared before a magistrate and was later released on bail. The court banned him from leaving the country. The case will be heard again on July 1. □

Report: Gang violence displaces thousands in Haiti's capital

Associated Press

PORT-AU-PRINCE, Haiti

(AP) — Escalating gang violence has pushed nearly 8,500 women and children from their homes in Haiti's capital in the past two weeks, according to a UNICEF report.

Officials say the gangs' fight over territory in Port-au-Prince has forced hundreds of families to abandon burned or ransacked homes in impoverished communities, with many of them staying in gymnasiums and other temporary shelters that are running out of water, food and items like blankets and clothes.

Bruno Maes, Haiti's representative for the U.N.'s children agency that issued the report late Monday, compared the effect to guerrilla warfare, "with thousands of children and women caught in the crossfire."

Nearly 14,000 people in Port-au-Prince have been displaced by violence in the past nine months, according to the U.N. office overseeing humanitarian coordination. Families with young children have been sleeping on concrete floors of a gymnasium in the Carrefour neighborhood, with only a sheet serving as a bed and their scant belongings stuffed into bags nearby.

Many expect the violence to increase as Haiti prepares for general elections scheduled for September and November: They accuse gangs of trying to boost support for certain candidates and of targeting neighborhoods that organize protests against



In this Dec. 10, 2020 file photo, a protester holds a sign with a message to stop supporting gangs during a protest demanding the resignation of Haitian President Jovenel Moïse in Port-au-Prince, Haiti.

President Jovenel Moïse. Pierre Espérance, executive director of the Haitian National Human Rights Defense Network, said gangs control about 60% of the country's territory and that 12 massacres have been reported since 2018 in disadvantaged communities. However, he said he is especially worried about the most recent upswing in violence.

"It's the worst we've seen," he said. "Gangs have so much power, and they are tolerated. ... Each day that passes with Jovenel in power, the situation is going to deteriorate."

A spokesman for Moïse could not be immediately reached for comment.

Last week, Léon Charles, general director of Haiti's National Police, said gangs

are fighting over territory and called on people to rise up against them: "The moment has arrived for the collaboration of all sectors." In addition to infiltrating rival shantytowns, gangs have targeted police stations in recent weeks, killing several officers. They also have raided businesses and fired on a car dealership on Monday as customers and employees fled. Hours later, Haiti's National Police said they had the situation under control and were collaborating with citizens "to thwart the attempts of these armed gangs wanting at all costs to create a climate of terror in the country."

The United Nations Integrated Office in Haiti said it was deeply concerned about the upsurge in gang

violence and called for it to end so humanitarian aid could reach those in need. Businesses and schools have closed and public transportation ceased in communities most affected by the violence, including Martissant and parts of

Delmas, with few entering or crossing the area for fear of being killed.

Doctors Without Borders said its emergency center in Martissant received more than 40 patients with gunshot wounds from June 2-4 alone, and that its employees have had to take cover from stray bullets.

"We are witnessing an extremely worrying deterioration in the security situation," the mission said. "At a time when we should be scaling up because of COVID-19 and other needs, we are struggling to keep our existing facilities open due to insecurity."

The mission and other health experts say they worry people aren't seeking medical help for fear of being injured or killed if they leave their homes as Haiti struggles with a spike in COVID-19 cases while still awaiting its first shipment of vaccines.

Meanwhile, Espérance, the human rights activist, said he doesn't foresee a quick solution: "It will be absolutely impossible to hold elections in Haiti in 2021." □

Associated Press

Mexican president to make National Guard part of army

By MARK STEVENSON

Associated Press

MEXICO CITY (AP) — Mexico's president said Tuesday he plans to make the National Guard part of the army, erasing the thin pretense of a civilian-controlled force that was used to gain approval for its creation two years ago.

President Andrés Manuel López Obrador dissolved the former Federal Police soon after taking office in late 2018, saying the force was corrupt. He replaced it with the National Guard under the nominal control of the civilian Public Safety Department.

But the army's involve-

ment in civilian policing has drawn complaints from the opposition and human rights groups, who say they only way out of Mexico's persistent high levels of violence is to clean up and strengthen the often corrupt, underfunded and poorly trained civilian police forces. □




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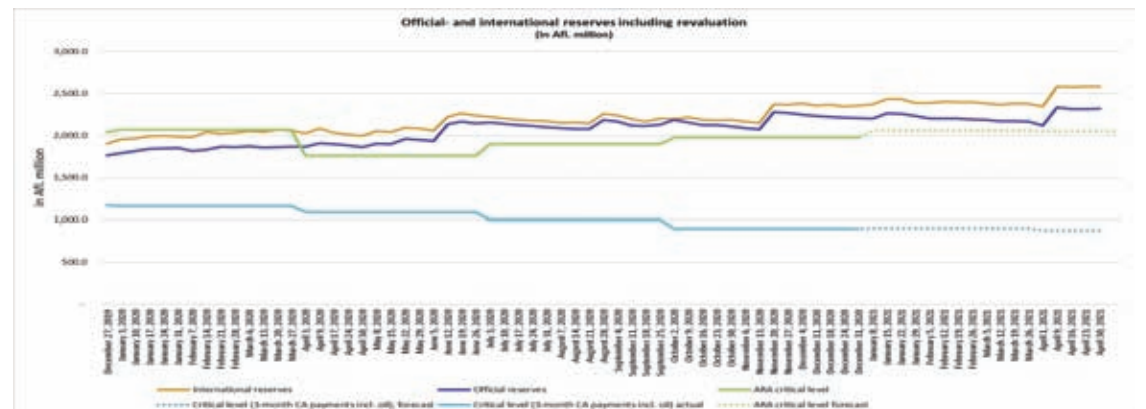
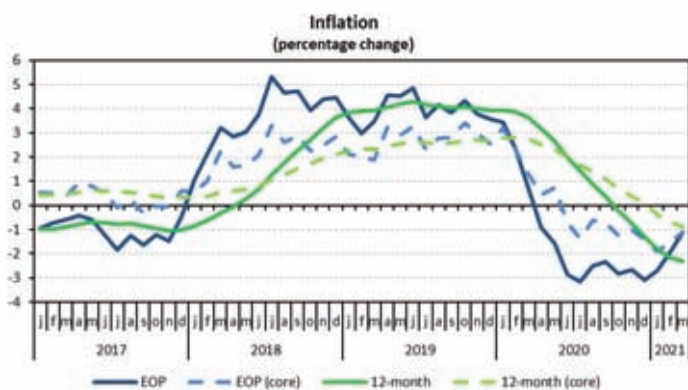
**35 USD*
PER PERSON**

**BOTTOMLESS
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*Kids 12 and under half price. Taxes not included

Lower demand for commercial banks' credit in March 2021



ORANJESTAD — During its meeting of May 18, 2021 and after reviewing the most recent economic and monetary data, the Monetary Policy Committee (MPC) of the Centrale Bank van Aruba (CBA) decided to keep the reserve requirement at 7.0 percent. The reserve requirement refers to the minimum amount of reserves that commercial banks must hold at the CBA and is equal to 7.0 percent of their liabilities with a maturity less than 2 years. The following information and analysis were considered in reaching this decision.

International reserves

International reserves (including revaluation differences of gold and foreign exchange holdings), up to and including April 30, 2021, strengthened by Afl. 223.7 million to a level of Afl. 2,580.3 million compared to the end of December 2020. This expansion was primarily the result of the Dutch government liquidity support received by the government of Aruba,

as well as higher inflows related to tourism services. Meanwhile, official reserves increased by Afl. 109.8 million. Consequently, the official and international reserves reached, respectively, Afl. 2,317.7 million and Afl. 2,580.3 million as of April 30, 2021. Accordingly, the level of reserves remained adequate when benchmarked against the current account payments and the IMF ARA metric (Figure 1).

Credit developments

In March 2021, total credit contracted by Afl. 28.5 million/0.7 percent to Afl. 3,935.6 million, when compared to the end of 2020. This was driven by the categories 'loans to individuals' (-Afl. 21.1 million/-1.1 percent), 'business loans' (-Afl. 3.9 million/-0.3 percent), and 'other' (-Afl. 3.6 million/-0.7 percent). The category 'loans to individuals' was mostly influenced by a lower demand in consumer credit. Meanwhile, the component 'business loans' was for the most part negatively impacted by commercial mort-

gages.

Inflation

The CPI was 1.1 percent lower in March 2021, compared to the corresponding month a year earlier (Figure 2). This was mainly attributed to lower prices in the categories 'recreation and culture' and 'clothing and footwear'. The 12-month average inflation rate continued its downward trend reaching -2.3 percent in March 2021. When excluding energy and food, the 12-month average core inflation rate stood at -0.9 percent in March 2021, down from 0.1 percent in December 2020.

Prudential liquidity

The prudential liquidity ratio of the commercial banks (34.8 percent), which measures the amount of their liquid assets to their total net assets, remained at a comfortable level in March 2021, far above the minimum required prudential liquidity ratio (15.0 percent). □

Your perceptions are important to us



ORANJESTAD — Fundacion Parke National Arikok interns Els Hesse and Jean-Paul Moquette from the Van Hall Larenstein University of Applied Sciences in the Netherlands have been surveying seagrass abundance and health in the Parke Marino Aruba over the past months. Besides this biophysical monitoring they are now conducting a survey "to understand the level of awareness and perception of the general public about the importance of seagrass".

FPNA would like to invite you to participate in and share this survey. The survey will take about 5 minutes and is available in 4 languages. Your input is very important to us and to the future of Parke Marino Aruba.

English: <https://forms.gle/Lmw5pyxf5hHAHfp6>
Papiamentu: <https://forms.gle/DMdcXhNeBwr1Z5j37>
Nederlands: <https://forms.gle/A4vocuAUDcvNNqJF7>
Español: <https://forms.gle/y9DWyfXchSuw6RJn6>

The National Park Arikok comprises almost 18 % of the island. Its rugged terrain, desert-like hills filled with tall cacti, breathtaking coastline and protected local flora and fauna welcome you to be explored. There is numerous wildlife to discover like for example the sea turtle who lays his eggs on the park's beaches. There are more places on the island that are a preserved area like the Bubali Plas which is a bird sanctuary.

The national park Arikok takes you on a memorable journey of the islands past offering unique geological, cultural and historical sites. These can all be enjoyed and explored either on your own or during guided tours. A wide variety of educational and informative programs and fun activities is available.

For more information go to:
www.arubanationalpark.org □

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Coming Soon: Shalom Hair & Nails Bar

Asi es mi Peru launches quality Food Truck at Eagle Beach

EAGLE BEACH — While operating two successful restaurants at Paradise Beach Villas-Eagle Beach, The Kitchen Table (TKT) and Asi es mi Peru (AEMP) who are both under one roof, COVID-19 interrupted operations of both restaurants and each and every restaurant in Aruba in March this year. TKT was closed temporarily, AEMP kept operating for take out in the weekends, operating lunch and dinner again in the weekends until fully operational in July.

It became clear says owner Roxanna Salinas, "that we would not be able to maintain all of the staff with hotel occupancies of around twenty percent once the tourists started returning slowly in August." But we saw it as an obligation to maintain all of our staff as one family! And that's when the idea of extending our services with a food truck was born so we could make sure to keep all of our staff who otherwise would be out of a job. A perfect food truck with all whistles and bells appeared on the horizon and with permits filed the food truck made her appearance at Eagle Beach at the end of Sep-



tember. Just, 100 yards from the restaurant at the corner of the T-crossing between Paradise Beach Villas and La Cabana. Convenient to offer a large scale of products!

Best ceviche and grilled chicken on the island

Our now famous ceviche, insiders say the best ceviche on the island, is a best seller and our roasted chicken (pollo a la brasa) are favorite items but hotdogs, hamburgers, salads, soups and wraps, empanadas and pastechis are just a few of the items offered. Actually, there are no restrictions as the entire Asi es mi Peru menu is available converted from dollars to florins. While most food trucks in Aruba operate in the evening and night the AEMP Food Truck operates from 11.00 am – 9 pm. Every day with the exception of Monday, orders can be called in at +297 592-5699 and picked up at the food truck.

Mi Retiro (My Retirement)

"When I married Roxanna says co-operator Jan van Nes, I knew that the word retirement was not in her vocabulary. Now, a retired hotelier for two years, I know that somewhere down the road there will always be something to do, even when our two restaurants would be operated by a younger generation. With this perspective the Food Truck could be called "Mi Retiro (My Retirement)."

For reservations for The Kitchen Table (www.thekitchenableinaruba.com) , Asi es Mi Peru (www.asiesperuenaruba.com) and take-out orders, feel free to call Roxanna at +297 592-5699. We love to welcome you! □





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Fundashon Stimami Sterilisami suspends it sterilization campaign for 2021

ORANJESTAD — For years Fundashon Stimami Sterilisami has been serving the community by helping in reducing the number of suffering and abandoned dogs and cats on our island. With help of its contributors, Stimami Sterilisami sterilized approximately 26.397 dogs and cats between 2016 and 2021. All this at a cost of over Awg. 3 million.

However, with a heavy heart, we regret to inform that our funds have been depleted. Our sponsors are unable to make donations this year and Aruba Bank's donation of Awg. 10.000 and Mr. Ewald Biemans, owner/CEO of Bucuti & Tara Beach resort and Presidente of Stimami Sterilisami foundation, personal donation of Awg. 100.000



is not sufficient to continue any longer. Now more than ever the efforts of

this foundation are necessary seeing that there are more and more pets on the streets abandoned and without owners. Sterilization is the most effective and compassionate method to reduce the numbers of stray dogs and cats. Without sterilization a cat is able to give birth to 62 kittens in a year and dogs up to 28 puppies, this will make all the hard work this foundation has been doing throughout the years in vain.

"We tried doing as much as we could this year and we looked everywhere on how to get funds, but unfortunately expense continue and no funds received," says Biemans.

For that reason, as of June 15th, 2021, Fundashon Stimami Sterilisami will need to suspend its activities until new funds are received from

past and future contributors for the national campaign of sterilization of pets. "This decision truly saddens us and we hope to recoup our sponsors soon so that we may continue with our national sterilization efforts," says Biemans.

Fundashon Stimami Sterilisami is a non-profit organization that uses 100% of its donations to offer partial or full subsidy for the sterilization procedure for house pets and strayed pets. Donations are extremely important for this foundation in order to continue its purpose.

For more information go to www.stimamisterilisami.com.

For donations:

Fundashon stimami sterilisami
Aruba Bank 6012630190

Dog Control Unit active



ORANJESTAD - Recently, Bureau City Inspector started the training in combination with other government services that will eventually strengthen the Dog Control Unit. The training is highly necessary for those who become part of this unit. They are trained to handle dogs without being bitten, and learn how to catch dogs efficiently which can vary from dog to dog.

On Monday, the entire team experienced the introduction given by veterinarian Irene Croes, followed by a lecture by dog trainer Tito Lacle. After the lecture, Dean Nicholson,

police dog handler, took over the training and continued with the training, both theoretical and practical training focused on what they will encounter in the field.

On Wednesday, the Dog Control unit took their mobile unit into the street for training and used an incoming police report reporting a serious case of dog abuse. The unit mobilized to the indicated address and on arrival found itself in a critical situation of dog neglect. In this case, the owner signed off his ownership of the dogs and the Dog Control Unit res-

cued 4 dogs and took them to the Dog Control Center for professional care.

The team had the opportunity to witness the cruel reality that many foundations face on a daily basis, the neglect of pets. The reality in Aruba regarding this situation is that most, if not all, animal shelter foundations have their hands full helping as many pets as possible with veterinary care and neutering in the hope of finding a new home for these pets.

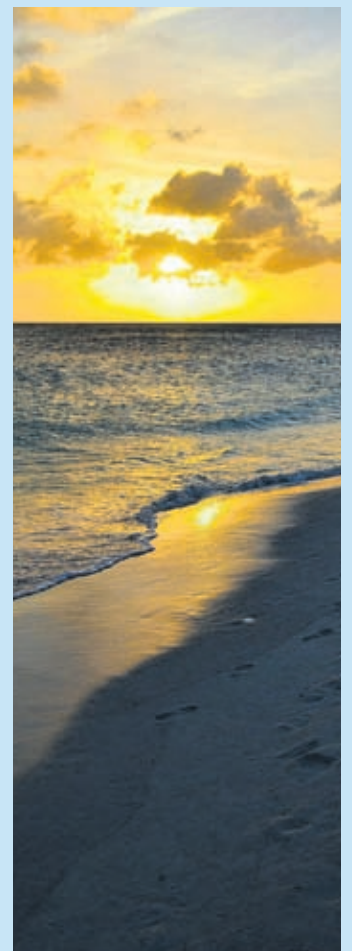
Hopefully the Aruba community will start helping by becoming a better pet owner, by being a better neighbor by notifying the authorities in good time of pet neglect before the neglect becomes critical and by adopting dogs instead of dogs to import. In this way, the foundations can help more dogs in painful situation given the number of dogs that need to be rescued and neutered.

Aruba to me.....

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Liz Weston: Should you save less for retirement?

By **LIZ WESTON** of NerdWallet

Gwen Merz was fresh out of college in 2014, working an information technology job she hated, when she decided early retirement was the answer. She socked away every dollar she could, saving as much as 70% of her income so that she could quit when she was 35.

Now 30, Merz thinks she may have saved too much. Her job and life goals have changed, but most of her \$300,000 savings is in retirement accounts that can't be touched without tax penalties. If she could do it over, she says she would either save less aggressively or put some of the money into a taxable investment account with less strict withdrawal rules.

"I would pay a little bit more in taxes on my salary but I would have that money available for me," says Merz, who lives in St. Louis. Some people save prodigious amounts so they can retire early or because they're worried they won't have enough for a comfortable retirement. But aggressive saving can have significant and sometimes unexpected costs, which is why it's important to strike the right balance between saving for the future and liv-

ing your life today.

ON FIRE, BUT LESS SO

Many people struggle to save anything for retirement, so the idea of saving "too much" may seem absurd. But there is a movement known as "Financial Independence, Retire Early," or FIRE, that promotes saving enough to gain control over how you spend your days long before typical retirement age. Some FIRE bloggers retired in their 30s from well-paying jobs by dramatically cutting their expenses and saving 50% or more of their incomes. Saving for a 20-year retirement is difficult enough. Planning for one that lasts 50 years or more often requires extreme frugality both before and after retirement, as FIRE adherents try to make their money last.

The FIRE movement inspired Merz to set her initial early retirement goal. After finding a more enjoyable job and buying a house, however, Merz has throttled back her savings goals and now plans to retire at 55. One unexpected bonus from saving less aggressively: She's less stressed about money.

"I always felt like I could do more since there were people online doing more



This April 2017 file photo provided by NerdWallet shows Liz Weston, a columnist for personal finance website NerdWallet.com.

Associated Press

than me," Merz says. "I really put myself under a lot of unnecessary stress and strain."

Certified financial planner Malcolm Ethridge of Rockville, Maryland, doesn't try to talk his clients out of the idea of retiring young. Many work in high-paying but demanding jobs in technology or finance and are feeling burned out by 80-hour workweeks.

"You're getting compensated well for the time you're putting in, but it's not sustainable," Ethridge says. "There's only so long you can burn both ends of

the candle before it disappears."

Instead, he encourages them to save enough so they can switch to work they're more passionate about, such as teaching, working for a nonprofit or starting a business.

"It's not so much 'I hate the job' as 'The thing that I do for a living takes a ton of my time and I don't feel like it makes the world that much better off,'" Ethridge says. Working at least part time in retirement can not only reduce the amount you need to save, but also gives structure and purpose, Eth-

ridge says.

"Retiring at 30 with \$2 million sounds great. It makes me sound like I've conquered the world," Ethridge says. "But I have nothing to do and nothing to be holding on to."

MOST WILL GET TO RETIREMENT AGE, BUT SOME WON'T

Merz says that even while she was saving most of her income, she still enjoyed occasional splurges, such as trips to Australia and Ecuador and a \$4,000 sewing machine for her quilting hobby.

Some super-savers, by contrast, are so focused on their futures that they neglect their present, says certified financial planner and physician Carolyn McClanahan of Jacksonville, Florida. As someone who has worked in hospital emergency rooms, McClanahan knows that the future isn't guaranteed.

"We see people that die way too soon, or get some serious illness that totally changes the trajectory of their lives," McClanahan says. McClanahan wants people to save enough to live comfortably after they retire, but also to start working on their bucket list of experiences long before they quit work. □

GM, Wabtec to develop hydrogen powered locomotives

DETROIT (AP) — General Motors has signed a deal to develop railroad locomotives powered by a hydrogen fuel cell and battery system.

Under a nonbinding agreement with locomotive maker Wabtec Corp., GM batteries and hydrogen technology will be used in locomotives to help railroads cut carbon emissions.

Wabtec already has built a battery-powered locomotive prototype. The Pittsburgh company said it was used with two diesel locomotives in a California test earlier this year that cut emissions by 11%. Fuel cell locomotives will follow

full development of the electric version.

The companies say in a joint statement Tuesday that Wabtec's experience in energy management will help the companies develop zero-emissions long-haul locomotives.

Financial details of the venture were not released. GM has been developing hydrogen fuel cell power systems for years. The systems will be assembled at a factory in Brownstown Township, Michigan, near Detroit that is a joint venture with Honda. GM and Honda have been working to jointly develop fuel cell vehicles.

In January, GM an-

nounced another partnership to make hydrogen fuel cell power systems for heavy truck company Navistar. The companies will run a test with trucking company J.B. Hunt to haul freight along yet-unidentified corridors in the U.S. in about three years.

Navistar says its hydrogen trucks will be able to go more than 500 miles (800 kilometers) on a single charge and can be refueled in less than 15 minutes. GM says Hydrogen fuel cells have an advantage over battery-electric powered trucks, with a longer range pulling heavy loads and because they can be refueled faster. □



This image provided by General Motors shows the GM Logo.
Associated Press

CROSSWORD

By THOMAS JOSEPH

ACROSS 40 Once more
1 Doorbell sound
6 Baseball's Ty

10 Can't stand
11 Camp craft
12 Aids in crime
13 Hunter in the stars

14 Old Italian coin
15 Whatever person
16 Greek vowel
17 Epitome of easiness

18 Tennis need
19 Rats
22 Bulls or Bears
23 Sunrise site

26 Some snakes
29 Georgia airport code
32 Maiden name label
33 Yoga need

34 Insect section
36 Take the bus
37 Song bit
38 Cruise ship

39 Church replies

DOWN
1 Alpine home
2 Animal's area
3 Repeat

4 Self-referential
5 Snaky shape
6 Grant of films

7 Leek's cousin
8 Trailblazer Daniel
9 "John Brown's Body" poet

11 Real
15 Presidential nickname
17 Annual books

20 Road gunk
21 Mineo of movies
24 Discussion group

25 Car price reducer
27 Cowboy nickname
28 Boat backs

29 Travel aid
30 Cook's mint
31 "Two Women" star

35 Orange cover
36 Latvia's capital
38 Research site

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Yesterday's answer

1	2	3	4	5		6	7	8	9
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	22					23		24	25
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34			35				36		
37						38			
39						40			
41						42			

6-16

AXYDLBAAXR
is LONGFELLOW

One letter stands for another. In this sample, A is used for the three L's, X for the two O's, etc. Single letters, apostrophes, the length and formation of the words are all hints. Each day the code letters are different.

6-16

CRYPTOQUOTE

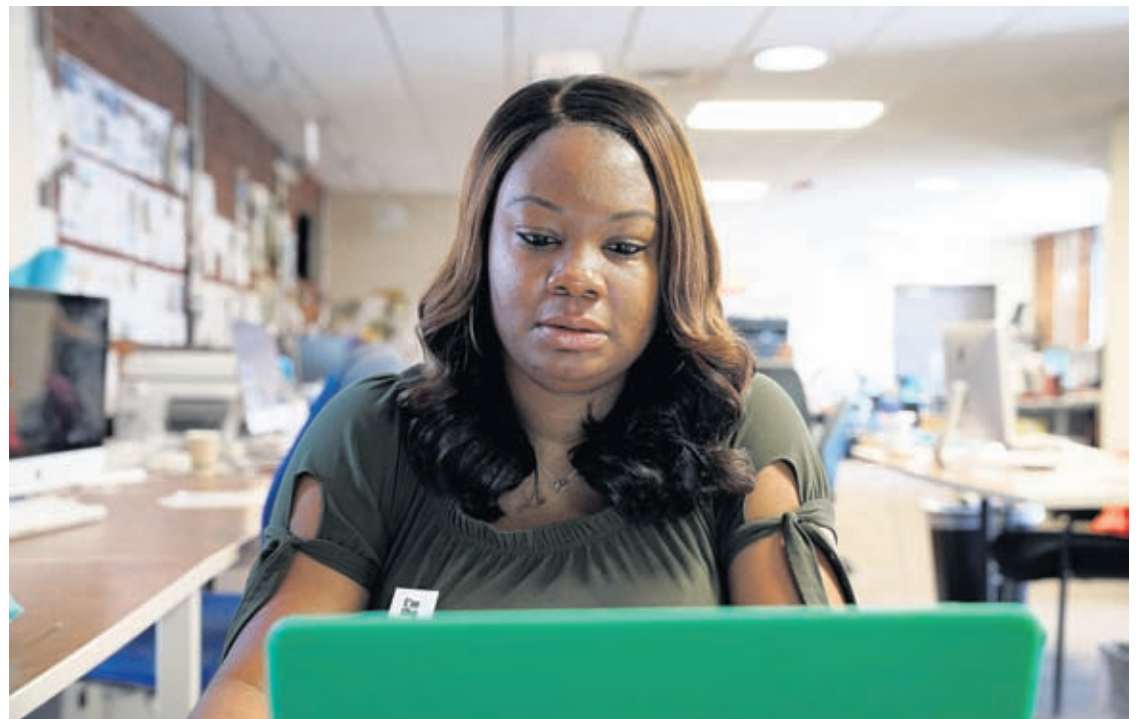
GTX EKSTG GR YX HXG JHRMX

KP KMOXXO GTX YXSKMMKMS

RB JHH BEXXORZ. — UKHHKJZ

R. ORVSHIP

Yesterday's Cryptoquote: AN AGE IS CALLED DARK, NOT BECAUSE THE LIGHT FAILS TO SHINE, BUT BECAUSE PEOPLE REFUSE TO SEE IT. — JAMES MICHENER



Dana Anthony works at her desk at The Daily Tar Heel newspaper in Chapel Hill, N.C., Tuesday, April 13, 2021.

Associated Press

Want a job? Employers say: Talk to the computer

By MATT O'BRIEN

A day after her interview for a part-time job at Target last year, Dana Anthony got an email informing her she didn't make the cut.

Anthony didn't know why — a situation common to most job seekers at one point or another. But she also had no sense at all of how the interview had gone, because her interviewer was a computer.

More job-seekers, including some professionals, may soon have to accept impersonal online interviews where they never talk to another human being, or know if behind-the-scenes artificial-intelligence systems are influencing hiring decisions. Demand for online hiring services, which interview job applicants remotely via laptop or phone, mushroomed during the COVID-19 pandemic and remains high amid a perceived worker shortage as the economy opens back up.

These systems claim to save employers money, sidestep hidden biases that can influence human recruiters and expand the range of potential candidates. Many now also use AI to assess candidate skills by analyzing what they say.

Anthony likes to look an interviewer in the eyes, but all she could see was her

own face reflected in the screen. "I interview better in person because I'm able to develop a connection with the person," she said.

But experts question whether machines can accurately and fairly judge a person's character traits and emotional signals. Algorithms tasked to learn who's the best fit for a job can entrench bias if they're taking cues from industries where racial and gender disparities are already prevalent. And when a computer screens out some candidates and elevates others without explanation, it's harder to know if it's making fair assessments. Anthony, for instance, couldn't help wondering if her identity as a Black woman affected the decision.

"If you apply for a job and are rejected because of a biased algorithm, you certainly won't know," said Oxford University researcher Aislinn Kelly-Lyth. In a face-to-face interview, by contrast, a job seeker might pick up discriminatory cues from the interviewer, she said.

New rules proposed by the European Union would subject such AI hiring systems to tighter regulation. Advocates have pushed for similar measures in the U.S.

One of the leading companies in the field, Utah-

based HireVue, gained notoriety in recent years by using AI technology to assess cognitive ability from an applicant's facial expressions during the interview. After heated criticism centered on the scientific validity of those claims and the potential for racial or gender bias, the company announced earlier this year it would end the practice. But its AI-based assessments, which rank the skills and personalities of applicants to flag the most promising for further review, still consider speech and word choices in its decisions.

The privately owned company helped create a market for "on-demand" video interviews. Its known customers have included retailers like Target and Ikea, major tech companies like Amazon, banks like JP Morgan and Goldman Sachs, oil giants, restaurant chains, supermarkets, airlines, cruise lines and school districts. The Associated Press reached out to numerous brand-name employers that use the technology; most declined to discuss it. HireVue CEO Kevin Parker says the company has worked hard to ensure its technology won't discriminate based on factors such as race, gender or regional accents. □

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Sta. Cruz	527 2900
San Nicolas	584 5000
Police Tipline	11141
Ambulancia	911
Fire Dept.	115
Red Cross	582 2219

TAXI SERVICES

Taxi Tas	587 5900
Prof. Taxi	588 0035
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TRAVEL INFO

Aruba Airport	524 2424
American Airlines	582 2700
Avianca	588 0059
Jet Blue	588 2244
Surinam	582 7896

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FAVI- Visually Impaired
Tel. 582 5051

Alcoholics Anonymous
Tel. 736 2952

Narcotics Anonymous
Tel. 583 8989

Fundacion Contra Violencia
Relacional Tel. 583 5400

Centre for Diabetes
Tel. 524 8888

Child Abuse Prevention
Tel. 582 4433

Quota Club Tel. 525 2672

General Info

Phone Directory Tel. 118



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Review: 'Hitman's Wife's Bodyguard' really misses the target

By **MARK KENNEDY**

Toward the end of "The Hitman's Wife's Bodyguard," there's a scene where Ryan Reynolds is repeatedly smashing a man's head into a jukebox aboard a yacht, as sometimes happens. Each time the bloodied head goes in the machine, it triggers a new song. Until it lands on "The Sign" by Ace of Base.

"You're lucky," Reynolds says to his unconscious rival before walking away to commit more mayhem. "I love this song."

That single scene beautifully captures the essence of the sequel to 2017's "The Hitman's Bodyguard" — overly violent, disarmingly cute and overly self-referencing. Fans of the original will get the in-joke about "The Sign" but the sequel itself will not likely make new fans. It suffers from what many sophomore films fall prey to: Same basic idea, but just make it bigger.

So if the first's plot was getting a witness to the Netherlands to testify about an European war criminal, the second is about saving the very existence of Europe itself. If the first had a star like Salma Hayek tucked in, the sequel is her elevation to co-star and the massive additions of Anto-



This image released by Lionsgate shows Ryan Reynolds, from left, Salma Hayek and Samuel L. Jackson in a scene from "The Hitman's Wife's Bodyguard."

Associated Press

nio Banderas and Morgan Freeman. Director Patrick Hughes returns for the overstuffed sequel but this time has trouble balancing the violence with the heart. Too many characters — a Boston Interpol agent and a rival bodyguard, among them — are blended into an unhinged 007-style plot with a tendency to veer uncomfortably personal.

Reynolds and Samuel L. Jackson again play frenemies and their exchanges

still crackle with electricity (and lots of potty language.) Reynolds is bodyguard Michael Bryce, a careful, safe professional ("Boring is always best," is his motto) who has found himself on hard times. Jackson is Darius Kincaid, a shoot-first, reckless hitman.

If "The Hitman's Bodyguard" was a bromance between these two, "The Hitman's Wife's Bodyguard" is a threesome, thanks to the scene-stealing role of

Kincaid's wife, played with insane energy by Hayek. She's as lethal and profane and impulsive as her husband. ("Your mouth needs an exorcism," a shocked Bryce tells her). But the effect is that this talented trio are unbalanced and awkward; three is definitely a crowd.

If there was a stylish chic in the first film, it's gone in the second, which sometimes seems cloying in its attempt to recreate the first.

In addition to Ace of Base, returning this time are repeat references to: "Hello" by Lionel Richie, a gaggle of nuns, the deadly use of a penknife, a Richard E. Grant cameo, someone ejected from a car for not wearing a seatbelt and the leads getting kidnapped by having their heads put in a bag. "This feels familiar," cracks Bryce. We know the feeling.

The plot puts Reynolds, Jackson and Hayek speeding across Italy to stop a madman from crippling Europe by destroying its electrical and data infrastructure, or something like that. The madman is played by Banderas who has forgone chewing the scenery in favor of swallowing whole chunks of it nosily while dressed like Liberace mated with "a set of curtains." (Actual dialogue more colorful.)

For some reason the writers — Tom O'Connor and Phillip Murphy and Brandon Murphy — have added an amnesia twist, a digression into fertility, a weird drug trip on a mood stabilizer and an ill-conceived exploration of parenthood and family legacy. Plus, they wasted the skills of Freeman in a nebulous, confusing role, which is inexcusable. □

Paris Jackson says paparazzi caused her long-term trauma



This image released by Red Table Talk shows host Willow Smith, left, and Paris Jackson, who will appear in an episode of the talk show series to discuss living under the media glare.

Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — Paris Jackson, stopping by "Red Table Talk" for a frank discussion about living under the media glare, reveals she suffers long-term anxiety and trauma from en-

during countless camera clicks by paparazzi since she was a child.

"I experience auditory hallucinations sometimes with camera clicks and severe paranoia and have been

going to therapy for a lot of things but that included," Jackson says. "I'll hear a trash bag rustling and flinch in panic." She adds: "I think it's standard PTSD."

Jackson, the daughter of Michael Jackson, has a one-on-one discussion with fellow paparazzi target and friend Willow Smith on Wednesday's edition of the online talk show that airs on Facebook Watch at 9 a.m. PDT/noon EDT.

During the show's introduction, Smith says she met Jackson on the set of mom Jada Pinkett Smith's TV show "Hawthorne." Smith and Jackson soon forged a bond over growing up with parents in the spotlight, and over love of music, modeling, and issues like mental

health, sexuality and body image. One way Jackson says she keeps some privacy is by asking people in her home to sign non-disclosure agreements. Jackson, who has dated men and women, tells Smith that while there is tension with some of her family members over her sexuality, she has leaned on her brothers — Prince and Prince Michael II — and longtime family friend Omer Bhatti.

"They've always been super-supportive," she says, noting that to better connect with his sister, Prince Jackson in high school joined a student-run club that unites LGBTQ+ and allied youth. "Not a lot of people can say they have

siblings that support them like that."

In 2020, Paris Jackson and then-boyfriend Gabriel Glenn — who formed the acoustic duo The Soundflowers — had a docu-series on Facebook Watch called "Unfiltered," which provided a glimpse into her private life. Jackson revealed self-harm and suicide attempts in her testimonials, and said music was a way to channel her pain. She released her debut solo album "Wilted" in November.

"Red Table Talk" has recently made headlines with interviews with Olivia Jade Gianulli, Kelly Osbourne, and when Pinkett Smith and her husband, Will Smith, discussed their marriage. □

Runner says tainted burrito led to test for banned substance

By The Associated Press

Shelby Houlihan, the American record holder in the 1,500 and 5,000 meters, was banned for four years after failing to prove that tainted pork caused her positive test for an anabolic steroid, sport's highest court said Tuesday.

Houlihan blamed a pork burrito bought at a Mexican street food truck when she revealed her doping case in an announcement on her Instagram account Monday.

A case that went ahead in secret for five months was published days before the start of U.S. Olympic track and field trials in Eugene, Oregon, where the top three in each event earn a spot to the postponed Tokyo Games. Houlihan finished 11th at the 2016 Rio de Janeiro Olympics in the 5,000 meters.

The Court of Arbitration for Sport confirmed Tuesday its panel of judges "unanimously determined that Shelby Houlihan had failed" to prove how the anabolic steroid nandrolone got into her system.

The case was fast-tracked with the consent of all parties to be heard on June 4 by video link with the court in Lausanne, Switzerland.



In this Sunday, July 28, 2019, file photo, Shelby Houlihan crosses the finish line as she wins the women's 5,000-meter run at the U.S. Championships athletics meet, in Des Moines, Iowa.

Associated Press

The verdict was announced without a detailed verdict. It stayed confidential until Houlihan's own announcement of the positive doping test and ban that runs to January 2025. It also rules her out of the 2024 Paris Olympics and the first track worlds to be held in the United States, next year in Eugene.

The 28-year-old Houlihan said she received an email from the Athletics Integrity Unit (AIU) on Jan. 14, notify-

ing her that a drug testing sample returned a finding for nandrolone.

She said she's since learned it has "long been understood by WADA (World Anti-Doping Agency) that eating pork can lead to a false positive for nandrolone, since certain types of pigs produce it naturally in high amounts. Pig organ meat (offal) has the highest levels of nandrolone."

Houlihan made a list of all the food she ate leading

up to a Dec. 15 test that detected the anabolic steroid.

"We concluded that the most likely explanation was a burrito purchased and consumed approximately 10 hours before that drug test from an authentic Mexican food truck that serves pig offal near my house in Beaverton, Oregon," Houlihan wrote. "I notified the AIU that I believed this was the source."

An email and text were left

with her agent.

Houlihan added that "although my levels were consistent with those of subjects in studies who were tested 10 hours after eating this source and WADA technical guidelines require the lab to consider it when analyzing nandrolone, the lab never accounted for this possibility. They could have reported this as an atypical finding and followed up with further testing. The anti-doping experts I have reached out to say they should have. I did everything I could to prove my innocence."

She said she passed a polygraph and had a hair sample analyzed by toxicologists.

"WADA agreed that test proved that there was no build up of this substance in my body, which there would have been if I were taking it regularly," Houlihan wrote. "Nothing moved the lab from their initial snap decision. Instead, they simply concluded that I was a cheater and that a steroid was ingested orally, but not regularly. I believe my explanation fits the facts much better — because it's true. I also believe it was dismissed without proper due process." □

Andy Murray defeats Benoit Paire 6-3, 6-2 at Queen's Club

LONDON (AP) — Former world No. 1 Andy Murray defeated Benoit Paire 6-3, 6-2 on Tuesday at the Queen's Club grass-court tournament, dispatching the Frenchman in 65 minutes for his first match victory in more than a year. It was Murray's first grass-court match in three years and he felt right at home, converting all three break points and never facing one himself. Murray hadn't played on grass since Eastbourne in 2018. His last match was a March loss to No. 8 Andrey Rublev of Russia and his last match win came in the first round of the 2020 U.S. Open, where he came back from two sets down to narrowly defeat Yoshihito Nishioka of

Japan.

After beating Paire, the often-injured Murray, who has undergone two hip surgeries, had to pause to gain his composure before speaking.

"I love playing tennis," he said, shaking his head as the crowd stood and cheered him. "Sorry. Obviously, competing is why you put in all the hard work. The last few years I have not got to do that as much as I would have liked. Great that I'm out here and able to compete again."

Murray had not played on the ATP Tour since Rotterdam in March. He had won both of his previous meetings with Paire, including at Wimbledon in 2017.

The popular 34-year-old

British star has won this tournament a record five times (2009, 2011, 2013, 2015 and 2016). His victory coupled with ones by Daniel Evans, wild-card entry Jack Draper and Cameron Norrie marks the first time that four British singles players have won a match at Queen's since 2005, the year Murray made his debut. Tim Henman, Jamie Delgado and Greg Rusedski also won that year.

In other matches Tuesday: Top-seeded Matteo Berrettini held off fellow Italian Stefano Travaglia 7-6 (5), 7-6 (4) in the Queen's Club debut for both players; British No. 1 Daniel Evans topped Australian Alexei Popyrin 6-4, 6-4; Alex de Minaur of Australia came



Andy Murray of Britain plays a shot during a practice session at the Queen's Club tennis tournament in London, Monday, June 14, 2021.

Associated Press

back to defeat Laslo Djere of Serbia 3-6, 6-3, 6-4; Alexander Bublik of Kazakhstan rallied past France's Jeremy

Chardy 6-4, 3-6, 6-3; and American Frances Tiafoe defeated Aljaz Bedene of Slovenia 4-6, 6-3, 6-4. □

MLB threatens pitchers with 10-game bans for altering balls

By **RONALD BLUM AP**

Baseball Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — Pitchers will be ejected and suspended for 10 games for using illegal foreign substances to doctor baseballs in a crackdown by Major League Baseball that will start June 21.

The commissioner's office, responding to record strikeouts and a league batting average at a more than half-century low, said Tuesday that major and minor league umpires will start regular checks of all pitchers, even if opposing managers don't request inspections.

While suspensions would be with pay, repeat offenders would receive progressive discipline, and teams and club employees would be subject to discipline for failure to comply.

"After an extensive process of repeated warnings without effect, gathering information from current and former players and others across the sport, two months of comprehensive data collection, listening to our fans and thoughtful deliberation, I have determined that new enforcement of foreign substances is needed to level the playing field," baseball Commissioner Rob Manfred said in a statement.

"I understand there's a history of foreign substances being used on the ball, but what we are seeing today is objectively far different, with much tackier substances being used more frequently than ever before. It has become clear that the use of foreign substance has generally morphed from trying to get a better grip on the ball into something else — an unfair competitive advantage that is creating a lack of action and an uneven playing field."

The last pitchers suspended for using foreign substances were Baltimore's Brian Matusz and Milwaukee's Will Smith for eight games each in May 2015. Both appealed, and Smith's penalty was cut to six games while Matusz's ban was upheld.



A Colorado Rockies pitcher shows his grip to a teammate during a spring training baseball workout in Scottsdale, Ariz., in this Wednesday, Feb. 24, 2021, file photo.

Associated Press

The perception of an increased use of foreign substances, tied to a drop in offense, is viewed as the largest instance of widespread cheating in baseball since the rise of steroids, which ended in the adoption of random drug-testing with penalties ahead of the 2004 season.

Yankees ace Gerrit Cole, singled out by Minnesota's Josh Donaldson for a drop in spin rate in a June 3 start, dodged a question last week about whether he had ever used a Spider Tack, a sticky substance designed for use by Strongman competitors.

"I don't quite know how to answer that, to be honest," Cole said. "There are customs and practices that have been passed down from older players to younger players, from the last generation of players to this generation of players, and I think there are some things that are certainly out of bounds in that regard."

MLB told teams on March 23 it would increase monitoring and initiated steps that included collecting balls taken out of play from every team and analyzing Statcast spin-rate data.

"Based on the information collected over the first two months of the sea-

son — including numerous complaints from position players, pitchers, umpires, coaches and executives — there is a prevalence of foreign substance use by pitchers in Major League Baseball and throughout the minor leagues," MLB said.

"Many baseballs collected have had dark, amber-colored markings that are sticky to the touch. MLB recently completed extensive testing, including testing by third-party researchers, to determine whether the use of foreign substances has a material impact on performance. That research concluded that foreign substances significantly increase the spin rate and movement of the baseball, providing pitchers who use these substances with an unfair competitive advantage over hitters and pitchers who do not use foreign substances, and results in less action on the field.

"In addition, the foreign substance use appears to contribute to a style of pitching in which pitchers sacrifice location in favor of spin and velocity, particularly with respect to elevated fastballs. The evidence does not suggest a correlation between improved hitter safety and the use of

foreign substances."

The anticipated clampdown already appears to have had an impact.

Fastball spin rates averaged 2,306-2,329 revolutions per minute each week from the start of the season through June 5, according to MLB Statcast data.

Following an owners' meeting on June 3 when talk of a crackdown emerged, the average declined to 2,282 during the week of June 6 and dropped to 2,226 on Sunday.

The major league batting average was .232 through April, down from .252 two years ago and under the record low of .237 set in 1968, and it was .236 through May, its lowest since 1968. The average rose to .247 in the week of June 6, lifting the season average to .238.

The strikeout percentage since June 3 is 23.4%, down from 24.2% until then, and the walk percentage is 8.4%, down from 8.9%.

"This is not about any individual player or club, or placing blame," Manfred said. "It is about a collective shift that has changed the game and needs to be addressed. We have a responsibility to our fans and the generational talent competing on the field to eliminate these substances

and improve the game."

While Bill Miller, president of the Major League Umpires Association, was quoted as being supportive in the announcement, there was no similar statement from the Major League Baseball Players Association. The players' union said it was reviewing the memo and did not have immediate comment.

Players suspended for violations will not be replaced on the active roster.

Rosin bags will continue to be allowed but rosin cannot be combined with sunscreen or other substances, and pitchers are being told not to use sunscreen after sunset in outdoor stadiums and not to use it at all in indoor ballparks. Umpires will inspect rosin bags before games to make sure they are standard.

As part of the initiative, umpires will check all starters multiple times and all relievers either at the end of his first inning or when removed, whichever occurs first. Caps, gloves and fingertips will be checked. Umps also may check when they notice sticky balls or when perceiving a pitcher going to his glove, cap, belt, uniform or body in a manner that may be to retrieve or apply a substance.

Catchers will be subject to routine inspections and position players may be searched.

Pitchers will be responsible for foreign substances found on catchers and position players. A position player will not be ejected for possession of a foreign substance unless the umpire determines the player was applying it to a ball to aid a pitcher.

Violators are subject to ejection and decisions are not subject to replay review. Refusal to allow inspection will be presumed to have violated rules and will be ejected. Club employees who assist players in using or masking foreign substances or who refuse to cooperate or who fail to report violations will be subject to fines and suspensions. □